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## PARAPSYCHOLOGY IN THE IBERO-AMERICAN WORLD

### PAST AND PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS

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**ABSTRACT:** This review of parapsychology in Spain, Brazil, Argentina, Puerto Rico, and Mexico points out that many developments in these countries rarely transcend the language barrier to become better known in the international community of psi researchers. The review focuses on developments in research and theory, as well as on parapsychological organizations, journals, and other aspects of the field. Parapsychology in some of the countries is very different from Anglo-Saxon parapsychology owing to cultural influences, but it shares with the rest of the world problems in financing research. The aim of this review is to help combat the language and cultural barriers that have limited cross-cultural communication of parapsychological activities and findings.

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Although parapsychology has a long history and tradition in some of the Ibero-American<sup>1</sup> countries, very little is known to the rest of the parapsychological community about the efforts of the Ibero-American parapsychologists to establish parapsychology as a respected field of science within their wider scientific community. Alvarado (1989a) has pointed out, this is perhaps due mainly to language-barrier problems. Other reasons, however, may also have contributed to the isolation and neglect of the Ibero-American researchers, among them the idea that third-world science is inferior to that of developed countries (e.g., see Garfield, 1987). In the case

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Persons desiring to contact research centers and publications that have been mentioned in this article and are still active may obtain addresses by writing to the author.

<sup>1</sup> I am using the term *Ibero-American* to designate any ethnic or linguistic group of Iberian and Latin American origin.

of parapsychology, some may see little value in monitoring publications and research in these countries, perhaps because they doubt that the material produced by such researchers would be of sufficient quality to make an important contribution to the field (Alvarado, 1989a).

This lack of attention to information about Ibero-American parapsychology presents a serious problem for English-speaking parapsychologists, who often receive invitations to attend parapsychological conferences in some of these countries where there are groups whose commitment to academic parapsychology is doubtful and whose only purpose in extending their invitations is to legitimize local efforts, which are sometimes a dubious mix of parapsychology, spiritism, ufology, and so on. A better knowledge of parapsychology in these communities could facilitate evaluation of the goals of specific groups who identify themselves as parapsychologists. David Hess (1990) has pointed out the following concerning Brazilian parapsychology:

[Since] anything "international" or "first world" in Brazil means additional status, the participation of PA parapsychologists at Brazilian conferences that represent one group could mean legitimating either Catholic or Spiritist parapsychology at the expense of the other group. (p. 110)

Although it is true that such groups exist, it is important to mention that there are also serious groups and researchers who for many years have carried out important work—work that deserves recognition even though the language barrier has hindered its reception in the international parapsychological arena. Efforts to bridge this lack of attention and to increase cooperation with Ibero-American researchers will not only help those in the English-speaking countries to better understand cultural differences and national styles in research practice, but also help the researchers in the Ibero-American world to improve the quality of their work. Therefore, I have selected the following countries for a general survey of the research that has been conducted in parts of Ibero-America: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Spain.

### Spain

There has never been a serious attempt to organize the history of psychological research in Spain, and information is scarce on early attempts to study psychic phenomena seriously. It was not until the 1920s that the Sociedad Española de Estudios Metapsíquicos was

created under the presidency of the Count of Gimeno, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Medicine. The Society published a journal called *Revista de Estudios Metapsíquicos* (Fernández Briones, 1981b). The research orientation of the Society was to study spontaneous cases and psychics, such as the famous Joaquín Argamasilla (expert in dermo-optical perception) whose abilities Houdini attempted to expose (Houdini, 1924).

Most of the work of this society, however, was lost after the Spanish Civil War during a period of isolation in which only a few researchers kept the torch burning. Familiar names from this period are Sánchez Herrero, the Marquis of Santa Clara, J. Palmés, and M. Otero y Acevedo, researchers whose independent efforts contributed to a new generation of investigators such as Ramos Perera Molina, Francisco Gavilán Fontanet, and Luis Fernández Briones. This latter group, at the beginning of the 1970s, founded the first well organized society to investigate psychic phenomena in Spain. It was called the Sociedad Española de Parapsicología (Fernández Briones 1981b). From its inception, this Society, under the direction of Ramos Perera Molina, had as its main goal to promote the scientific study of parapsychology. To achieve this goal, the Society combined the efforts of experts in experimental design, illusionism, psychology, medicine, and other fields of science and in 1976 established research center (De Vicente, 1983).

To carry out its research projects, the Society has been divided into several research committees that specialize in different areas embracing field studies as well as experimental projects. Among these committees are those concerned with the development of theoretical models to enhance ESP, Kirlian photography, experimental research, OBEs, and the medical aspects of psi. More recently, a new committee was established<sup>2</sup> to investigate anomalous phenomena along the lines of the Society for Scientific Exploration.

Members of the Society have carried out original research projects in experimental parapsychology as well as research on spontaneous cases. They have also critically evaluated miracle claims made by the Catholic church in Spain, such as the liquefaction of the blood of Saint Pantaleón (Jordán Peña, 1983).

One of the most interesting investigations has been conducted by members of the research committee headed by Francisco Gavilán Fontanet (1976). In this study, the committee investigated alleged

<sup>2</sup> The goal of the committee is to investigate UFOs, cryptozoology, religious paritions, and other phenomena scientifically.

twin girls presumed to have been born with psi abilities. The case had received extensive coverage by the media in Spain. According to the reports of the case, one of the twin girls had suffered a burn on her hand while ironing. Her sister, separated from her at the time the burning occurred (16 kms away), developed a similar burn on the same hand. The Society sent a team of researchers to carry out a careful investigation of the case. They conducted a series of experiments to determine the possible existence of psi communication between the sisters. One of the experiments consisted of separating the two girls into two different buildings and stimulating one of them (the sender) with different sensorial inputs (like perfume) while observing physiological reactions, such as pupillary and palatal reflexes, in the other twin (the receiver). Psychological profiles of the twins were also obtained from projective tests. The sessions with the two girls were simultaneously filmed to document the stimuli as well as the perceptual pattern of the reactions. The results showed simultaneous reactions of the twins' reaction time and visual and olfactory responses.

In 1978 the members of the Society conducted another important study, an international survey of the motivational factors of parapsychological researchers. Headed by Gavilán Fontanet (1978), the main objective of the study was to find out what motivates parapsychologists to investigate psychic phenomena.

They surveyed 201 parapsychologists from 18 countries around the world. Among the parapsychologists were J. B. Rhine, S. Krippner, and C. Tart. Three hundred questionnaires, each having 23 questions, were prepared in five different languages<sup>3</sup> and were mailed to researchers throughout the world. Among the interesting findings were that 61% of the respondents were psychologists, psychiatrists, and medical doctors, 45% considered themselves agnostics, 24% got involved in parapsychology while looking for a philosophical answer to the question of the nature of man, 31% got involved for scientific reasons, 51% believed in a transcendent intelligence, 50% believed in some type of survival after death (of these 10% believed in reincarnation), and 71% rejected astrology.

Another research objective of the Society was the search for a theoretical model to enhance psi abilities. For this purpose the Society created the Committee for the Development of ESP<sup>4</sup> headed by Luis Fernández Briones. The Committee's purpose was to outline

<sup>3</sup> The languages were English, French, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese.

<sup>4</sup> A group that conducts experimental and theoretical research about ESP.

a methodological model for the practical development of ESP. Once the model and the techniques were developed, the Society hoped it would be possible to train subjects to obtain positive results over an extended period of time (Fernández Briones, 1976), thus confronting the replicability problem that characterizes most psi research. Although the Committee has not been successful as yet, the results obtained so far are encouraging. Fernández Briones summarized the findings in his book entitled *Desarrollo de la Percepción Extrasensorial* [The Development of Extrasensory Perception] (1983). Among the techniques used by the Committee to attain this goal are the inducement of altered states of consciousness and the application of learning theory principles to ESP performance, such as those proposed by Charles Tart (1966). Although the results have only been suggestive, Fernández Briones was hopeful enough to emphasize the need for more research to test the proposed models sufficiently.

Other research conducted by members of the Society includes investigations of poltergeist cases (Jordán Peña, 1980)<sup>5</sup>, conceptual papers related to the ability of some fish, such as the electric eel and the sturgeon of the Nile, to obtain information about their surroundings through electrical communication, which the authors speculated might be a primitive language of telepathy (Bardasano Rubio & Arano Bermejo, 1980a); examination of the migration of carrier pigeons and other animals to develop a model for ESP (Bardasano Rubio & Arano Bermejo, 1980b); and studies of the sociological and anthropological aspects of psychic surgery (Jiménez Vicedo, 1984). Moreover, other members of the Society have speculated on the pineal gland as a possible somatic organ for ESP reception (Bardasano Rubio et al., 1981); examined neurophysiology and its importance for parapsychological research (Jiménez Vicedo, 1985); considered the psychophysiological correlates of hypnosis and its implications for parapsychology (González Ordi, 1985); investigated perception of the laying-on of hands by a sensorially isolated subject (Prat et al., 1988); proposed three-dimensional models of RSPK studies, that is, the cases are studied within a parapsychological, psychological, and psychosociological context (González Ordi, González Ordi, & Berrocal Muela, 1984); and offered theoretical models to explain firewalking (Perera, 1989).

In the educational area, even though efforts have been made to include parapsychology in the curriculum of universities in Spain

<sup>5</sup> Jordán Peña published a book called *Casos Encantados, Poltergeists and Haunted Houses*, Poltergeists] (1982), in which he presented an overview of cases and theories of hauntings. For a review of this book, see Alvarado (1985).

these have not been successful as yet. Since its inception, however, members of the Society have been very active in organizing numerous educational activities and seminars at different universities. The seminar offered by the president of the Society, Ramos Perera Molina, at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in 1975 drew distinguished and prominent figures such as Prince Juan Carlos of Spain and his wife and the minister of education.

Since 1975, the Society has also published a biannual journal, entitled *Psi Comunicación*, which includes English abstracts. The journal covers both the activities of the Society and a wide range of topics in parapsychology, some of which have been mentioned. In addition, their journal includes a section for national and international news on parapsychological activities around the world. Members of the Society have published several books summarizing its research activities. I have already mentioned the books by Fernández Briones (1983). Other books include an anthology, entitled *La Nueva Parapsicología: Introducción a la Parapsicología Científica* [The New Parapsychology: An Introduction to Scientific Parapsychology] edited by Fernández Briones (1981a), a valuable introduction to the field, and Mario Capel's *La Supervivencia Después de la Muerte: Evidencia Espontánea y Experimental* [Survival after Death: Spontaneous and Experimental Evidence] (1981) reviewing some of the research and phenomena related to the issue of survival after death.

Although parapsychology has been negligible in Spain until recent times, it is important to point out that we are now witnessing a boom in parapsychological activities in that country. Unfortunately, even though the Society seems to be the best organized, and to have the most resources in the Ibero-American world, its members have not participated in the broader international parapsychological conferences, such as that of the Parapsychological Association, possibly because of the language barrier. In addition, it is unfortunate and disheartening to find that such a large, productive, and well-organized society has no member in the PA.

### Brazil

At the 1990 Parapsychological Association convention, David Hess, who has made several field trips to study Brazilian parapsychology, presented a paper in which he described Brazilian parapsychology in the following terms:

Brazil does not have a coherent community of academic parapsychologists, and there are few if any people in Brazil who research and publish

at the standards of the Parapsychological Association. Instead, what called "parapsychology" in Brazil is largely defined by rival groups of Catholic and Spiritist (Kardecist) intellectuals. (Hess, 1990)

To understand parapsychology in Brazil, we need to be familiar with the cultural milieu from which it has evolved, one that is dominated by Afro-Brazilian cults and Catholicism. On the one hand we have the Spiritist tradition that came from France through the teachings of Allan Kardec; Spiritists believe that spiritual progress effected by a series of compulsory reincarnations. They believe that mediumship provides opportunities to communicate with deceased individuals. Moreover, Spiritism is strongly influenced in Brazil by the Afro-Brazilian cults such as Umbanda and Candomblé, derived from the African religions brought to Brazil through the slave trade (Bastide, 1971; Giesler, 1985).

This spectrum of Spiritist beliefs and Afro-Brazilian religion has crept in and mixed in Brazilian society (Hess, 1987), creating a variety of belief systems from which Brazilian brands of parapsychology have evolved. There are many interesting combinations of the Kardecist type of Spiritism and all sorts of Brazilian religious movements that essentially accept possession, the influence of spirits of deceased individuals, as well as the belief that divinities can possess individuals and can effect healing (Parra Alvarez, 1988).

On the other hand, there is the Catholic tradition that has developed a system that uses parapsychology as an ideology with which to fight and eventually destroy all the movements the church sees as superstition and threats to the established Catholic dogmas (Hess, 1990). This system has been developed mainly through the work of one of the most influential and respected "parapsychologists" in Ibero-America, Father Oscar González Quevedo, a Spanish-born Jesuit priest living in Brazil. Padre Quevedo (as he is known) and Luis Ferreira da Silva cofounded the Latin American Center for Parapsychology, CLAP, of the Anchieta College of São Paulo in 1970.

The Center, which was closed down in 1982 and reopened in 1989 under reduced circumstances, used to offer clinical counseling for people suffering from psychological problems related to religious experiences and practices (e.g., demonic possession). The Center still has an impressive library<sup>6</sup> of books on parapsychology which used to be housed in huge facilities that also accommodated an experimental and clinical laboratory and a museum of objects.

<sup>6</sup> One of the biggest parapsychology libraries in Latin America with approximately 4,000 volumes.

related to parapsychological phenomena, Spiritism, miracles, and psychic healing. In addition, the Center offers seminars and short courses in parapsychology during the year.

The stated goal of the Center listed in a publicity leaflet<sup>7</sup> is to disseminate scientific parapsychology in order to clarify the misconceptions and superstitions produced by the lack of understanding of psychic phenomena. The content of their publications, however, seems to indicate that the real objective of the Center has been to destroy Spiritism and its belief system because it contradicts the church's teachings. Consequently, the Center has been ruled by a religious ideology.

Discussion of Brazilian parapsychology must focus essentially on the work of Quevedo, because his work and publications have been the major source of scientific parapsychology not only for Brazil but also for other Ibero-American countries since the 1960s. It is necessary also to emphasize his publications because they are well respected and are considered by many to be representative of the Catholic school in Brazilian parapsychology.<sup>8</sup>

Father Quevedo has published several books on parapsychology, some of which have become best sellers in the Spanish language as well as in Portuguese, reaching a surprising number of editions.<sup>9</sup> Among his books are a general introduction to parapsychology (1969/1973), a discussion of ESP and other mental phenomena (1964/1974), and another about physical mediumship (1969/1971). He has also authored other polemical books on healing (1976/1977) and possession (1989).

According to a well-known Spanish parapsychology journal, Quevedo has offered numerous seminars and courses throughout Ibero-America, often drawing audiences of more than 200,000 people. He has also appeared in over 200 hours of television. Quevedo's impact, spreading what is his version of parapsychology, has been astonishing in its education of the lay person (Fernández Briones, Jiménez Visiedo, & Capel, 1975).

Unfortunately, however, what could have been one of the most important contributions to scientific parapsychology in Ibero-America is overshadowed by Quevedo's zealous campaign against Spiritism.

<sup>7</sup> A promotional leaflet published by CLAP entitled "O porque do CLAP."

<sup>8</sup> For further discussions of Brazilian parapsychology, see Hess (1990) and Playfair (1975).

<sup>9</sup> In Portuguese alone, 90 editions of 30,000 copies each, and more than 20 editions in Spanish and Italian (Parra & Pedroza, 1991).

ism, in which he explains Spiritist findings as fraud or psi by living organisms, and his equally strong defense of Catholic beliefs. Not only has Quevedo separated himself from the real goals and objectives of the CLAP, but he has also used parapsychology as an ideological weapon in a fight to further his particular conceptual perspective. As Hess (1987) pointed out:

Oscar González Quevedo reininterpreted the parapsychology of the United States and Europe in light of Catholic Church doctrine... to challenge the scientific basis of claims of Spiritism, Umbanda, and the Afro-Brazilian religions. (p. 26)

In fact, to accomplish his goals, Father Quevedo has distorted parapsychology in his books, seeking most of the time to accommodate church dogmas. He sometimes goes to the extreme of making subtle changes in the content of classical writings on parapsychology so as to support his own views (Martínez Taboas, 1998) and to deny any possible explanation that may be close to the Spiritist point of view. In doing this, Quevedo has used investigations conducted for many years by centers around the world, together with numerous references from classical works, including those conducted by the Rhines and others at the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory. As David Hess (1990) has further pointed out:

Both Spiritists and Catholics will still appropriate PA parapsychology, and the older studies of psychical research for their own purpose. They like to have the foreigners do the empirical research (the "dirty work") while they sit back and put it into their own philosophical or theological framework. (p. 110)

The system of parapsychology Quevedo developed has been an entirely different conceptualization of the field and completely different goals from those of the parapsychological research done in other parts of the world. For Quevedo, parapsychology helps to establish a dichotomy between what he considers natural phenomena and the supernatural, or phenomena that cannot be explained by any paranormal mechanisms (e.g., the miracles of Lourdes) and various saints). Quevedo divides the causes of parapsychological phenomena into three types. The natural ESP abilities, classified as paranormal, are manifestations of the soul, which was created perfect and possessed unlimited psychic abilities but was restricted when the first man sinned. Such abilities, Quevedo says, are occasionally manifested by people during mental disturbances such as trance. Another category is those phenomena that are beyond suc-

human abilities, that is, the phenomena are supernatural. According to Quevedo, when a parapsychological explanation cannot account for the manifestation of certain psychic phenomena, the explanation should be left to the theologian. Quevedo also includes another interesting category that for many would not be considered parapsychology—what he calls “extraordinary normal phenomena,” phenomena that can be explained by normal or unusual psychological and physiological processes. For example, Quevedo uses the term *pentomnesia* (unlimited unconscious memory) as a mechanism that can explain some types of xenoglossy phenomena. When someone manifests this phenomenon, Quevedo believes it means that the person once heard the language and is merely repeating previously learned phrases. Another phenomenon classified under this category is indirect hyperesthesia. According to Quevedo, all our thoughts have an equivalent physiological reaction and are reflected in our bodies. For example, if I am thinking about something, I produce very subtle physical movements or signals that other persons near me can decode unconsciously. The information obtained unconsciously can then be transformed into actual knowledge. Quevedo (1964/1974) uses this concept to explain most of the phenomena exhibited by mental mediums.

Moreover, according to his system, Quevedo (1969/1973) views the excessive manifestation of psychic phenomena in individuals as a pathological problem that should be treated with psychotherapy. Although he considers such manifestations to be natural, an excess of them denotes pathology. Consequently, the manifestation of ESP abilities should never be encouraged or developed. That sets his tradition completely apart from the one that seeks to develop psi and to understand conditions that enhance its manifestation.

Quevedo's conclusions, however interesting, are not derived from empirical research. Rather, his procedure is to review the writings of different authors, especially those from the classical works, and use the material to develop his own conclusions. In a thorough review of three of Quevedo's books, the Puerto Rican psychologist Alfonso Martínez Taboas (1978) identified numerous contradictions, omissions, distortions of the evidence, and dogmatic statements by Quevedo. Quevedo's book *Las Fuerzas Físicas de la Mente* alone had 70 problems of this sort. One example of his exaggerated statements appears on page 289 of his book *El Rostro Oculto de la Mente*. In this passage Quevedo concludes the following about precognition:

Very few established facts about Chemistry and Physics and other branches of science have been so well established as precognition in

parapsychology.... And the most important thing is that thousands of laboratory experiments have scientifically proved without any doubt that man possesses this ability. (1964/1974, p. 289)

Without any empirical evidence to support his theory, Quevedo limits the operative range of precognition to two centuries. He does this to prove that man possesses limited temporal abilities, a conclusion supporting the Church dogma that only biblical prophecy is unlimited by time, for it is divine in nature and is the result of God's intervention; that is, it is a miracle.

The CIAP also used to publish a magazine called *Revista de Parapsicología*, which summarized the activities of the Center and contained mostly theoretical articles. More recently, however, the Center closed down, apparently because of a prohibition imposed by the Church as a result of a polemical book published by Quevedo (1989) entitled *Antes Que Os Demônios Valem* [Before the Demons Return]. In this book Quevedo, ironically, uses parapsychology to make skeptical commentaries on Catholic dogmas concerning demonic possession; he also tries to explain demonic possession through parapsychological mechanisms. He criticizes the traditional Church use of the *Rituale Romanum* in determining the cases of demonic possession. Essentially, Quevedo points out the shortcomings of the *Rituale Romanum*, which does not include psychic phenomena as an alternative explanation that might account for most of the cases of demonic possession.

There is no doubt that in developing his system Quevedo has extensively surveyed the whole field of parapsychology. In a review of some of his books, George Zorab (1971) states:

These three volumes, comprising nearly 1000 pages, fully inform the reader about all the various aspects of modern parapsychology. It is the same time a fair and reliable guide. In a sense it is unique in the present day literature of the subject, for since Richet's *Traité de Métapsychique* (1922) and F. Moser's *Okkultismus* (1935) no such comprehensive work covering the whole extensive field of modern parapsychology has been put on the market. (p. 142)

I certainly would agree with Zorab's opinion on the amount of work carried out by Quevedo, work that certainly deserves recognition. I would not, however, characterize his work as fair and reliable as far as the handling of the evidence is concerned. To a certain extent, Quevedo's position is justified when he tries to fight superstition such as that spread by the psychic healers who are very popular in Brazil. In a sense he is a minority in a society with

a high concentration of Spiritists whose beliefs threaten the established Catholic dogmas. However, when he uses parapsychological evidence of certain phenomena as a scientific backup to establish facts, when this same evidence is still very controversial for many parapsychologists, his position is untenable. Nonetheless, his work has to be seen in the cultural and ideological background from which he has worked (Alvarado, 1991).

Another dimension of Brazilian psychical research is the work by researchers with Spiritist orientation. One example is that conducted by the engineer and psychical researcher Hernani Guimarães Andrade, who in 1963 founded the Brazilian Institute of Psychobiophysical Research (IBPP). The name was chosen to make it clear that the Institute intended to explore biological and physical as well as purely psychical phenomena. One of the most significant things about this Institute is that it emerged from within the Spiritist movement (Playfair, 1975). Andrade, a Spiritist himself, has conducted well-planned and detailed investigations of reincarnation cases along the lines of Ian Stevenson's work. His poltergeist cases are particularly interesting—for example, the one published in a monograph entitled *O Poltergeist de Guarulhos* (1984). These cases involve very dramatic phenomena: apports, damage to furniture and persons, apparitions of strange creatures, and spontaneous fires. In evaluating and interpreting the cases, Andrade leans toward the disincarnate agencies hypothesis, sometimes with possible witchcraft components (Alvarado, 1984; Andrade, 1984). Also, as Michel-Ange Amorim (1990) has remarked about Andrade's interpretation of the cases:

Andrade interprets the different types of occurrences present in this case [the Guarulhos's case] as supportive of a Spiritist world view in the Umbanda tradition. The Umbanda tradition has several million adherents especially in the bigger cities. It combines African, Catholic, Indian, and Spiritist elements and may be characterized as a relatively extra-ecclesiastic of popular Catholicism with ancient Afro-Brazilian sects. (p. 199)

According to Amorim, not only does Andrade interpret his cases along the Spiritist lines but he also accepts the central beliefs of this religion, such as the existence of all sorts of spirits, like Exus and Umuluns. He also believes that the sorcerer is able to practice magic within the terreiros (a place specialized in these procedures) to harass victims according to Quimbanda laws (the black magic side of the Umbanda religion).

Concerning Andrade's interpretation of the aforementioned case of Guarulhos, Amorim (1990) also states:

Thus, he rejects the usual attributions of RSPK outbreaks to a living agency. In defense of his position he points to the fact that a psychological examination of Noêmia [a participant in the case], the most probable RSPK agent, was conducted by two psychologists belonging to the IBPP team. He states, "Mrs. Noêmia didn't display any form of psychical abnormality that could justify viewing her as belonging to the 'psychokinetic agent of a poltergeist' category in conformity with the theoretical patterns suggested by the current hypothesis. . . . He adds that his macro-PK tests . . . of her capacities were also negative. (p. 199)

It is important, however, to point out that to some extent the cases investigated by Andrade and his associates seem to reflect the influence of the beliefs and culture of Brazilian society (Hess, 1990). Andrade has also published one of the first systematic treatises on parapsychology in Portuguese entitled *Parapsicologia Experimental* (1967). A basic introductory manual of the quantitative method used in parapsychology, it includes a detailed description of the statistical model used in experiments with ESP cards.

There are other groups in Brazil who are interested in a more scientific approach to psychical research. One of these groups is the recently established ECLIPSY-Instituto de Investigações Científicas em Parapsicologia. This group aims to pursue a different approach, one separate from the more traditional approaches associated with Spiritist or Catholic orientations typical of most Brazilian research centers. It received support from the University of São Francisco to organize its first conference in parapsychology, held in 1992, which included participants from the University as well as researchers from Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico. The group plans to conduct experimental research that will be reported in its new journal, called *Revista Brasileira de Parapsicologia*. According to its president, Wellington Zangari, it will include abstracts in English as well as in Spanish. The journal will also include translations from major experimental and theoretical articles published in the English-language journals.

There are also other groups involved in parapsychology in Brazil that are beyond the scope of this paper because of limitations of space and because of our initial goal of evaluating Brazilian parapsychology from the perspective of its impact on the Ibero-American countries.

#### Argentina

For many years Argentina has been the top-ranking country in Ibero-America in terms of experimental parapsychological research.

However, research has diminished in the last few years, partly because of the recent deaths of two of the leading contributors, J. Ricardo Musso and Enrique Novillo Paul.

Early research began in Argentina about the same time the Duke University Laboratory was established in the United States. The 1930s witnessed one of the most important events in the history of Argentine parapsychology. In 1931, the first institute of psychology was established at the University of Buenos Aires. The institute included paranormal psychology as one of the areas to be investigated by the department. Parapsychology appeared to be joined to psychology from the beginning. The chairman of the psychology department, Enrique Mouchet, was interested in clairvoyance research and had come to the conclusion that it was necessary to include paranormal psychology in the syllabus of courses offered by the department (Musso, 1973).

However, Argentinian researchers have had to struggle with the traditional spiritualistic methodology that characterized the study of psychical research in this country in the past. The research being conducted in the young Duke Parapsychology Laboratory had a major impact on the new generation of Argentinian researchers. The move toward a more quantitative approach to the study of scientific parapsychology was pioneered by a young engineer by the name of José Fernández, who was teaching physics at the University of Buenos Aires. Although Fernández belonged to a Spiritualist group called ATMAN, he had been in search of an adequate methodology to investigate the psychic phenomena manifested by mediums and clairvoyants. He hoped to be able to apply statistical principles to the responses given by the mediums. Fernández presented the results of these experiments in 1941 to a meeting of the Sociedad Científica Argentina. Fernández's efforts to introduce quantitative methodology in Argentina had a major impact on the approaches that other young researchers were to follow in establishing scientific parapsychology there.

Another development during this period was the creation of the Asociación Argentina Médica de Metapsíquica in 1946 by a group of physicians headed by Orlando Canavesio. The aim of this society was to evaluate the medical and legal status of parapsychology scientifically and to promote its development in scientific circles as well as to determine its proper classification, that is, to decide whether the discipline belonged to psychology or physiology, or whether it could be considered to be a new branch of science.

Canavesio himself wrote his doctoral thesis on a study of electroencephalographic records of gifted subjects. This society pub-

lished a journal called *Revista Médica de Metapsíquica* summarizing the research of the society. Included among the articles published in the journal was a study of the use of dowsees by the government to find water in towns where the lack of water had become a hardship for its inhabitants. During this period, the work of Canavesio was important because of his connection to the government, a connection that helped to legitimize parapsychological studies in Argentina (Musso, 1973).

The creation of the Instituto de Psicopatología Aplicada in 194 by the Secretary of Public Health was another important development. The aim of the government was to establish tight control over the Spiritist activities in Argentina, which were considered to be social evil. More specifically, the aim was to control the exploitation of people engaged in nonscientific practices such as healing and so on.

The Institute created a subsidiary, the Comité de Investigaciones Metapsíquicas, which was assigned to conduct experimental research with gifted subjects, specifically during mediumistic sessions. The Committee intended to explore the medical and legal implications of Spiritist practices, as well as to determine whether genuine parapsychological phenomena were exhibited during these sessions by the gifted subjects. The Committee was also interested in uncovering negative factors that might induce mental illness, such as neurosis, in the participants. More specifically, it seems that the chief objective of the Committee was to determine whether the promoters of these mediumistic sessions were practicing medicine illegally (Parra, 1989).

In 1949 José Fernández founded the Sociedad Argentina de Parapsicología. Fernández, who was already known for his quantitative approach to psychic phenomena, continued to promote the statistical approach used by the Duke researchers. This approach was reflected in the Society's main objective, which was to study and investigate parapsychological phenomena with emphasis on the development of statistical methods. By then Fernández had received from Rhine a copy of *Extra-Sensory Perception After Sixty Years* (Parra Rhine, Smith, Stuart, & Greenwood, 1940). The book had a major impact on Fernández, who applied Rhine's mathematical models to his own research. Fernández also circulated the book among his friends (Musso, 1973).

The Society conducted the first serious experiments on clairvoyance in Argentina using ESP cards and statistical procedures. The study, with gifted subjects, obtained significant results. Fernández presented the results of these experiments in a pamphlet entitled

*Psicología Experimental*. The Society also conducted other experiments such as the one with the well-known clairvoyant Conrado Castiglione. The study used the empty-chair technique similar to that used with Ludwig Khan and with Gerard Croiset (Musso, 1973).

The first Instituto Argentino de Parapsicología was established in 1953. It brought together several men who represented the most critical approach of the time, men such as José Fernández, Orlando Canavesio, J. Ricardo Musso, and Naum Kreiman. The Institute was organized to include a main scientific research department, along with several sections, such as the medical-biological section and a physics and mathematics section. The principles of the Institute reflected the critical approach their members followed in conducting their research. One of these was to subject every hypothesis to scientific examination, so that only those that would withstand the most stringent tests would remain. In addition to the creation of the Institute, this period of the 1950s was also characterized by a growing interest in publishing books on parapsychology. One of the first systematic treatises on parapsychology in Spanish written by J. Ricardo Musso (1954) was called *En los Límites de la Psicología: Desde el Espiritismo hasta la Parapsicología* [On the Limits of Psychology: From Spiritualism to Parapsychology]. Other developments included a paper by Musso in 1957, which was published in a journal put out by the ministry of education of the province of Buenos Aires. It was the first time a paper on parapsychology had been published in a government review. In addition, parapsychology was incorporated as a course in five different universities. In 1960, Ricardo Musso was awarded a professorship at Rosario University to teach parapsychology, and, for the first time in any country, a course in parapsychology was made a requirement for a doctoral degree in psychology (Rueda, 1989).

In 1962 the Institute conducted studies confirming the sheep-goat effect, using primary-school children as subjects. The results were published in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Musso, 1965). Other important experiments included "An ESP Drawing Experiment with a High Scoring Subject," also published in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Musso & Granero, 1973). Moreover, Musso and his wife and colleague, Mirta Granero, conducted an international experiment on long-distance ESP called the "Antarctic Experiment." Although the results were not statistically significant they were important because the experiment involved subjects from twenty different countries (Musso, 1973, p. 168).

The expansion period of parapsychology was interrupted in 1966 when the then current Argentinian government was over-

thrown by a military coup; most state universities were forced to eliminate the study from their curricula. In spite of the prevailing negative conditions standing in the way of university status for the subject, a new quarterly publication was founded. The *Cuadernos de Parapsicología*, perhaps the most important publication in the history of Argentinian experimental parapsychology, took the responsibility of disseminating a high level of academic parapsychology. Headed by Naum Kreiman, it has been the most professional organ of scientific parapsychology in Argentina to the present time.

Owing to the military takeover of the government that eliminated most of the parapsychology courses offered at the state universities, parapsychology did not enjoy the same status at the beginning of the 1970s as it had during the period of university expansion of the 1960s. Some new developments during this period kept the torch lit, however. Among the most important ones was the creation of the Instituto de Parapsicología in 1970. It is headed by Naum Kreiman, a bio-statistician and a co-founder of the Instituto Argentino de Parapsicología in the 1950s. Kreiman has played a key role in the development of the quantitative approach to the study of parapsychology for the last 30 years. From 1964 to the present he has conducted numerous original experiments as well as replications of some of the most important experiments conducted in foreign countries. With the help of his wife and collaborator, Dora Ivinsky, and Ladislao Márquez, he has conducted numerous experiments that have been published in the *Cuadernos*. Among them are exploratory testing with ESP cards (Kreiman & Ivinsky, 1964); ESP using photographs as targets (Kreiman, 1965); the sheep-goat effect in ESP (Kreiman, 1972); the effect of feedback on ESP (Kreiman & Ivinsky, 1973); ESP and memory (Kreiman, 1975); memory and precognition (Kreiman, 1978); psi and volition (Kreiman & Ivinsky 1980); brain laterality and ESP (Kreiman, 1981); precognition of human actions (Ivinsky & Kreiman, 1981); and remote viewing (Kreiman, 1983).

Institute members such as Dora Ivinsky have done extensive work in keeping the Argentinian parapsychological community informed of activities around the world by translating numerous experiments and theoretical papers from languages other than Spanish from the *Journal of Parapsychology* and elsewhere. The diligent experimental work done by Kreiman since the 1950s and continuing to the present time makes him one of the most important laboratory researchers in Argentinian and Ibero-American parapsychology.

Another important development during this period was the creation of an Institute of Parapsychology at the Catholic University of

Córdoba by the Catholic priest Enrique Novillo Pauli. One of the principal activities of the Institute was to teach courses on parapsychology in the school of psychology at the University. The staff of the Institute also provided consultation and orientation to bishops, priests, and families about phenomena such as poltergeists and bleeding religious images. Unfortunately this institute recently closed down after the death of Father Novillo.

Prior to the creation of the Institute, Novillo Pauli had been at the Foundation for Research on the Nature of Man in North Carolina where he conducted some PK research with seeds as targets under the auspices of the Organization of American States. Novillo Pauli presented the results of his experiments at the annual convention of the Parapsychological Association in 1972 (Novillo Pauli, 1973). During the period of his stay at the FRNM, he also prepared a book on parapsychology entitled *Los Fenómenos Parapsicológicos: Psi en el Laboratorio* (1975), which included reports of his PK studies. The studies were also reported in the Spanish-language parapsychological journals *Cuadernos de Parapsicología* (1974) and *Psi Comunicación* (1976).

In spite of the marked decline since the 1970s, an important recent development is the organization of a parapsychology conference in Argentina in 1987, the Primer Encuentro de Parapsicología. It was sponsored by the University of Salvador of Buenos Aires and held under the direction of Enrique Novillo Pauli. Some of the topics discussed at the conference were mental healing studies, altered states of consciousness in relation to psi performance, and quantum mechanics (Alvarado, 1989b). Soon afterward, Argentina suffered the loss of two of its most important pioneers, J. Ricardo Musso, president of the Instituto Argentino de Parapsicología (which he directed until his death in 1989) and, in the same year, Enrique Novillo Pauli. Consequently, the activities of Musso's institute declined, and the institute at the University of El Salvador headed by Enrique Novillo Pauli closed down. Since then, the Institute of Parapsychology headed by Kreiman has remained as the most important source of professional parapsychology in Argentina.

During the 1980s, parapsychology in Argentina was characterized by a marked decline in experimental activities. Most of the work during this period was conducted by members of the Institute of Parapsychology under Kreiman, who, as in previous years, maintained a constant interest in reporting original experiments, including replications of foreign experimental works. They also continued to publish regularly their quarterly journal, which contained translations of some of the most important research published in English.

Recently, a new parapsychology journal, the *Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal*, has appeared. It is published by an independent group of parapsychologists called LAPAS (Laboratory of Parapsychology) and edited mainly by Alejandro Parra. Judged by its content, the journal seems to be a worthwhile addition to the current efforts to keep the Argentinian audience well informed on professional parapsychology. However, some of the experiments of the researchers in this group have not been well received by other Argentinian researchers, who consider the experiments to be flawed (Kreiman, 1990; see also Alvarado, 1990). LAPAS has also started a Spanish-language parapsychology information center. The Center is building a computer data bank from which Spanish-speaking parapsychologists may obtain information about a bibliography of parapsychology similar to the *Parapsychology International Abstracts* published by Rhea White (Villanueva, 1990).

In addition to these recent developments, CSICOP has made its way to Argentina. A former member of Naum Kreiman's research group, Ladislao Márquez, has created an Argentinian version called Centro Argentino Para la Investigación y Refutación de la Pseudociencia (CAIRP). The most important aims of CAIRP are to denounce fraud and to promote a critical scientific assessment of the claims made by pseudoscientists. The board of directors, headed by Ladislao Márquez, also includes foreign members, Martin Gardner, for instance.

The prospects for Argentinian parapsychology in the 1990s seem less favorable than those of the booming period of previous years. The present difficulties in the Argentinian economy have increased for researchers, making it difficult for them to obtain funds to support their research and publications.

In a recent survey conducted on the present status of parapsychology in Argentina, Naum Kreiman reported that research has decreased substantially over the last five years. Most of the recent research reports have come from Kreiman's Institute of Parapsychology. Educational activities in the field are almost nil except for a course being offered at a small university called John F. Kennedy University (Kreiman & Ivinsky, 1989).

In a letter published in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, Jorge Villanueva (1990) pointed out some of the major problems that Argentinian researchers face at the present time. Among them are: lack of support from public and private institutions, lack of serious book in Spanish to provide responsible information on the subject, and lack of proper technology and other means to conduct sophisticated research. Some of these problems, Villanueva suggests, may be di-

minished by increasing communication and collaboration with foreign parapsychologists.

#### Puerto Rico<sup>10</sup>

Early psychical research in Puerto Rico was strongly influenced by the nineteenth-century Spiritualist movement that had also spread to other countries. Mediumistic séances in which raps and communication with the spirits were common drew attention mostly from people with a religious interest.

It was perhaps this influence that led Agapio Morales to publish in 1904 a more critical examination of these phenomena. In his booklet *Breve Tratado de Hipnotismo, Magnetismo, Espiritismo y Sugestoterapia*, Morales contended that all those occurrences could take place without assuming the action of spirit agencies. He interpreted possession as being autosuggestion and attributed paranormal phenomena to our own psychic faculties. He considered that all of the experiments made until today demonstrate that there is an invisible force in our being that is capable, for instance, of playing a guitar, lifting a table, or lifting our own bodies. According to him this force is under our control. He also believed that mediumistic communication could be explained by means of telepathy between the medium and the siter.

Another major influence in the formation of a more empirical and critical approach to parapsychology was the work of Francisco Ponte, a dentist who became president of the Puerto Rican Federation of Spiritists. Ponte visited Europe in 1912 to familiarize himself with the work of several Spiritualistic centers, as well as psychological research centers. He had had the opportunity to participate in mediumistic séances in Italy with famous mediums such as Lucia Sordi and Eusapia Palladino. During these séances he witnessed manifestations of apparent telekinesis and materializations (Alvarado, 1987; Ponte, 1914).

Later Ponte returned to Puerto Rico and tried to reproduce the same phenomena with local mediums. He reported some of his findings on materializations of body parts during séances to Walter Franklin Prince, then Research Officer of the ASPR. Ponte's work was important because of the critical and empirical approach he brought to his research on séance phenomena (Alvarado, 1979a).

<sup>10</sup> This section on Puerto Rican parapsychology partly summarizes information contained in an article by Alvarado (1979a).

The theoretical ideas of Ralph U. Sierra are also interesting. Sierra, who was interested in the psychology of ESP, believed that to develop telepathy it was necessary to develop first an internal state of tranquility so that the electrical activity of the brain did not interfere with the telepathic process (Sierra, 1966).

Some of the most important developments, however, took place during the last two centuries. At the educational level, it is important to note the work of Celinda Madera who, during the 1970s, offered a series of courses and lectures at different campuses of the University of Puerto Rico. Madera's courses focused on the humanistic and transpersonal aspects of psi. She herself had received training at Duke University's Parapsychology Laboratory (Alvarado, 1979a).

In 1974, Nestor A. Rodríguez Escudero, a lawyer, published a series of essays about parapsychology and Spiritualism in his book *Los Caminos de Dios*. He discussed a great variety of paranormal phenomena. His main objective was to show that parapsychology demonstrates the spiritual aspect of man (Rodríguez Escudero, 1974).

Another development in 1977 was the creation of the Instituto de Investigaciones Psicosóficas at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez campus. Founded to conduct investigations in parapsychology and related areas, the Institute carried out studies of various parameters of Kirlian photography and of the effects of hypnosis on ESP. However, these research investigations were never made available for publication. During this period Alfonso Martínez Taboas began to publish a newsletter *Explorando lo Paranormal*, a semipopular magazine later edited by Carlos Alvarado starting in 1976.

Martínez Taboas and Carlos Alvarado wrote articles on parapsychology in Spanish for the Spanish journal *Psi Comunicación*, which they also published in other journals. Their articles covered a wide range of topics. Among these, Alvarado wrote on experimental studies of OBEs (1976), historical precedents of the so-called psychic discoveries behind the Iron Curtain (1978), the use of historical knowledge (1979b), and on J. B. Rhine (1980). Martínez Taboas published a review of the problem of repeatability in parapsychology (1979), a critique of psychological and physiological concepts of polytarget research (1977, 1980, 1984; Martínez Taboas & Alvarado, 1981), and a discussion of the concept of parsimony applied to parapsychology (1983).

The work of Martínez Taboas and Alvarado has been very important in the effort to bridge the language barrier between the Spanish researcher and the non-Spanish-speaking researcher. This

is particularly true of Alvarado's book reviews (1984a, 1985) and his discussion of language-barrier problems in parapsychology (1989a). Moreover, Alvarado, a former research assistant at the Division of Parapsychology (now the Division of Personality Studies) at the University of Virginia, has maintained a constant flow of information on parapsychological activities in Latin America to research centers in the United States for the last eight years. In addition, among the Ibero-American parapsychologists, he is the one who has published most extensively in the English-language journals and the only one ever to be elected a member of the Board of Directors of the Parapsychological Association.

#### Mexico

Mexico has been known for a long time as the land of the sacred mushroom or peyotl, a plant used by the Indian shaman to induce an altered state of consciousness, which allegedly facilitates the manifestation of psychic powers. This country has also been a major source for many parapsychological researchers interested in unorthodox psychic healing practices. Famous curanderas (healers) such as María Sabina and Doña Pachita have been extensively investigated by Stanley Krippner and other famous parapsychologists (Krippner & Villoldo, 1986).

Although Mexico has been a major source of study for many parapsychologists from foreign countries, psychical research has not flourished there as it has in other countries such as Argentina and Spain. Moreover, even though the country is located on the southern border of the United States and has been subject to very strong American cultural influence in almost every aspect of life, the dominance of the United States has not been a factor in the development of parapsychology. Even though in the United States there are more parapsychological research centers than anywhere else in the world, very little is known in Mexico of their research. Most of what is known about serious parapsychology comes from Latin American countries such as Brazil. For example, the writings of Quevedo are well known in Mexico, and also most of what is known generally comes from popular magazines.

Early efforts to study psychical research within a scientific framework in Mexico began in 1919 with the isolated efforts of such researchers as the German-born medical doctor Gustav Pagenstecher, the first researcher to conduct serious psychical research in Mexico. Pagenstecher was a very well-known and respected physician in the

Mexican medical community as well as in political circles. In the course of his career he delivered speeches before two presidents of Mexico, Díaz and Obregón (Allison, 1943).<sup>11</sup>

A respected member of the medical profession, Pagenstecher said he had been a materialist for forty years when he had his first encounter with the paranormal. It was during a hypnosis treatment of one of his patients who had insomnia that he discovered the remarkable psychical gifts of María Reyes de Zierold. Pagenstecher began a series of psychometric experiments with her in 1919. The results were so striking that he brought them to the attention of the Mexican medical society, which appointed a commission to verify them. Pagenstecher also decided to write to the ASPR and send some of the results he had obtained. The results induced Walter Franklin Prince, Research Officer of the ASPR, to go to Mexico to investigate the case. After a series of experimental sittings with Zierold, Prince was so impressed with the results that he decided to publish them in the *Journal of the ASPR* in 1920 (Pagenstecher, 1920). Prince later published another paper in which he discussed the experiments in which he participated (Prince, 1921b). Moreover, the ASPR published a monograph by Pagenstecher entitled *Parapsychic Sensitivity: A Study of Psychometry* (Pagenstecher, 1922).

According to William Roll (1967), Pagenstecher contributed to two major areas in parapsychology:

[He was], as far as I know the first investigator to use hypnosis as a means to cultivate ESP in a gifted subject.... Pagenstecher's studies were also, I believe, the first to indicate that the (parapsychological) association of objects may be governed by the same laws that govern the (psychological) association of ideas. (p. 238)

Pagenstecher showed great courage in undertaking these experiments. He jeopardized his professional standing as well as his medical practice by trying to substantiate the claims for Zierold's psychic abilities. The Medical Commission appointed to investigate the case was skeptical of the reported phenomena. Fortunately, however, the Commission's leading experts obtained successful results in the experiments in which they participated (Gomezharper de Treviño, 1990).

<sup>11</sup> Obregón was a revolutionary military leader, later President of Mexico. Walter Franklin Prince (1921a) relates an interesting psychic experience witnessed by Obregón, about a precognitive dream Obregón's brother had about the death of their mother.

Another development in parapsychological activities in Mexico occurred in 1937. A team of medical doctors, headed by Dr. Enrique Aragón, formed a special commission to investigate an alleged case of poltergeist activity surrounding a thirteen-year-old Mexican boy named Joaquín Velázquez Villavicencio. As part of the investigation, the team tried to measure the level of RSPK energy, using a special apparatus called a sthenometer designed by the French psychical researcher Paul Joire to detect PK forces (Gomezharper de Treviño, 1990). Aragón's contributions were important to parapsychology in Mexico because of his prestigious position and his academic attainments. Aragón was at one time president of the University of Mexico and was also founder and Director of the Instituto de Psiquiatría y Psicología there. He conducted field research on haunting cases, precognitive dreams, and fraud in Spiritism.

In 1939, Aragón founded the Círculo de Investigaciones Metafísicas de México.<sup>12</sup> The aim of the Institute was to conduct a scientific investigation of a case of alleged materialization produced by the most famous medium in the history of Mexico, Luis Martínez. The medium started his activity when he was six years old and allegedly could produce incredible phenomena, such as lights, reports, direct writing, direct voices, levitations of objects, and so forth. The attention drawn by the case led to the participation of medical and political men in the sessions. Two ex-presidents of Mexico were said to have participated in the séances (Garofano, 1988). Other work worth mentioning is that conducted by the Jesuit priest and psychical researcher Carlos María Heredia. He recorded several observations and experiments in which odors (or other stimuli) associated with forgotten experiences were presented to the subject, theoretically causing an imbalance in the subject's subconscious memories associated with the odor which, in turn, induced a telepathic transmission of the forgotten experience to a nearby perceptive (Heredia, 1931/1945).

For Heredia, telepathy and spontaneous case occurrences were fairly acceptable; however, phenomena of the séance room were to him anathema. Having developed some skills as an illusionist, he used to tour the country demonstrating mediumistic manifestations,

<sup>12</sup> This research group later changed its name to Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Síquicas, which also published a detailed account of the séances with the medium Luis Martínez which lasted for over ten years. The publication was called *Una Ventana al Mundo Invisible* [A Window to an Invisible World] (Instituto Mexicano de Investigaciones Síquicas, 1960). Another interesting dimension of this case is the participation in the séances of two well-known Mexican psychical researchers, Gustav Pagenstecher and Carlos María Heredia.

as he supposed, by his methods of nonspiritual conjuring. He wrote a book along these lines debunking the mediumistic phenomena claimed by Spiritists; it was called *Los Fraudes Espiritistas y los Fenómenos Metapsíquicos* (1931/1945). Unfortunately these efforts to organize serious centers and societies to study psychic phenomena from a more empirical approach never led to a more formal type of organization; most of these centers and investigations were short-lived.

Since the 1930s, very little is known of any other serious efforts to introduce scientific parapsychology to Mexico. After 1940, as mentioned at the beginning of this section of the paper, the best known studies have been conducted by anthropologists and parapsychologists interested in nonorthodox practices of healing particularly those of the shamanistic variety.

Among the healers was the famous Oaxacan shaman, Barbara Guerrero, best known as "Pachita," who practiced as a psychic surgeon and who in the 1960s became the subject of enormous attention. Pachita was studied by Krippner and Villoldo (1986) and others. Another healer, perhaps the best known of all, was María Sabina, who drew worldwide attention because of her use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in her unusual healing practices.

It was not until 1974 that the first Mexican parapsychological society was created, the Sociedad Mexicana de Parapsicología, headed by Carlos Treviño, a psychiatrist and an Associate Member of the Parapsychological Association. The Society at the present time represents the most critical approach to parapsychology in Mexico. It trains researchers and provides education both to the Church and to lay persons concerning alleged cases of demonic possession and other manifestations of psychic phenomena. The Society also offers courses in parapsychology to the general public in an attempt to correct misconceptions about the nature of scientific parapsychology. For example, in Mexico the common belief is that parapsychology is a mixture of magic, demonology, and sorcery. A parapsychologist is thought to be a person who reads Tarot cards and coffee grounds and prepares horoscopes. Under these circumstances an average Mexican tends to dismiss such beliefs, particularly since they are deeply rooted in their tradition and cultural heritage (Gomezharper de Treviño, 1990).

Along with courses for the general public, the Mexican Society is the only organization that offers an officially required course for candidates to the priesthood studying at the Instituto de la Argue diócesis de México. Members of the Society have also conducted ex-

perimental research with Kirlian photography (Treviño, 1975) and field investigations of haunting cases and poltergeists.

Some parapsychological conferences have been organized in Mexico—for instance, the Congreso Internacional de Parapsicología held in 1984 in Mexico City. The Society also organized the Primer Simposio de Parapsicología Científica held in 1984. At this meeting a number of PA members presented papers, among them Marilyn Schlitz and Stanley Krippner (Gomezharper de Treviño, 1990).

Another conference worth noting is the one organized by the newly created Sociedad Mexicana para la Investigación Escéptica. The first Latin American skeptics' conference was cosponsored by CSICOP and convened in Mexico City in 1989. The conference included speakers such as Ray Hyman and James Alcock, as well as several psychologists from the University of Mexico. The new Mexican society of skeptics headed by Mario Méndez has launched a journal called *El Investigador Escéptico*, which will be made available throughout Latin America for Spanish-speaking readers.

An example of the attention to parapsychology given by high-ranking political figures in Mexico was the visit of the wife of the former president of Mexico, Carmen López Portillo, who visited the Institute for Parapsychology in North Carolina to participate in some testing demonstrations of ESP. It is also interesting to note that the president's sister, Margarita López Portillo, prepared a video about the life of the famous Mexican healer "Pachita." There are also some isolated researchers in Mexico such as Jacobo Grinberg who in 1977 conducted research in dermo-optic perception.

It is unfortunate that one can find no serious parapsychological publications in Mexico at the present time. There are only some popular magazines on the topic, such as *Duda* [Doubt].<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion

So far, I have surveyed the past and present positions of parapsychology in several Ibero-American countries. But what does this conglomeration of names, societies, and research centers mean? First of all, as I have pointed out, my purpose was to familiarize the English-speaking parapsychologists with the work of their colleagues from other countries, especially those researchers who have been in

<sup>13</sup> *Duda* is a magazine that is widely published nationally. It includes sensational articles on mixed topics such as UFOs, ESP phenomena, cryptozoology, and so on.

the field of parapsychology for many years but whose work and publications have been neglected in the major English-language journals. Second, I have reviewed a variety of parapsychological activities so as to provide the reader with insight into the different approaches to psychical research in different countries as well as into the cultural, geographical, and historical factors that have colored parapsychology in those countries. Some of the information provided is new and, may I say, very interesting. The different research methodologies pursued by the parapsychologists in these countries range from the empirical quantitative approach of the Argentinean group, who follow the Rhinean School, to the theoretical gentianian approach shaped by the influence of ideological and Spiritualistic approach of the Brazilian Spiritists and Catholic researchers. However, in a way, these different approaches to the study of psychic phenomena are reflections of the cultural milieu in which the research has evolved.

Another important feature that emerges from an examination of the developments of parapsychology in these countries is that most Ibero-American researchers are in the main plagued with the same practical and theoretical problems common to most other countries involved in psychological research. Common problems are the struggle to gain recognition in their own scientific communities and the lack of economic means to support research.

Still another unfortunate pattern is the isolation of individual researchers in these Ibero-American countries from their counterparts in the English-speaking parapsychological community. Some of these researchers, such as J. Ricardo Musso and Naum Kleinman from Argentina, have been doing research and publishing extensively since the 1950s but remain virtually unknown outside their own countries. Very few of the researchers from those countries have ever belonged to the Parapsychological Association. A brief review of the most recent list reveals that even at the present time there are very few Ibero-American members in the PA, an organization that claims to be international.<sup>14</sup>

It is my hope that this brief summary will bridge the gap and create by the language barrier and will remedy the previous lack of information, thus fostering communication between Ibero-American researchers and their English-speaking colleagues. The increase in communication with parapsychologists in the Ibero-American countries

<sup>14</sup> Ibero-American members account at the present time for less than 1% of the Parapsychological Association members (Parapsychological Association, 1991).

tries becomes more important now that CSICOP has taken an aggressive role in approaching these countries with conferences and new societies.

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